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IN MANY MOODS

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

In Many Moods.

POEMS BY

T. Berry Smith.

FAYETTE, MO.

1900.

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In Many Moods.

PART I.

IN SOBER STRAIN.

FOREVERSE.

I would rather be the factor
Of a song the world repeats
Than the blood illumined actor
Drawn in triumph thro' the streets;
His the victor's scenic glory
Dying with the rabble's cheers;
Mine the poet's classic story
Living thro' the lapsing years.

VERNALIA.

(PICTURES OF SPRINGTIME.)

Bowed at thy altar,
Trembling I falter,
Bringing, O Spring, this offering of mine;
Toiling I've builded
Frames that are gilded
'Round about many a picture of thine.

I.

Sunshine and showers
Waken the flowers—
Waken the innocent flowers from rest;
Long they've been sleeping,
Mother Earth keeping
Lovingly, warmly, clasped to her breast.

II.

First of the number
Waking from slumber,
Creeping the moldering foliage through,
Like a good angel
Bringing evangel,
Comes the wild violet nodding and blue.

III.

Buttercups golden
Skyward are holden
Set to catch raindrops spilled from the clouds,—
Set for night's brewing—
Dewdrops accruing
While the stars shine and stillness enshrouds.

IV.

Down from their sources,
Swift in their courses,
Brooklets unfettered frolic and fall;
Drink that divine is,
Better than wine is,
Bring they unstinted, priceless to all.

V.

Lightnings and thunder
Waken our wonder,
Born of the raincloud suddenly brewed,—
Breath of its blowing,
Tears of its flowing
Falling on plowed land, meadow and wood.

VI.

Nightly in Bogland,
Kingdom of Frogland,
Traineth a multitudinous choir;
Bass note and treble—
Pebble 'gainst pebble,
Castanet, drum and dissonant lyre.

VII.

Singing with gladness,
Banishing sadness,
Back from the southland winging their flight,
Come the sweet singers,
Merriment bringers,
Birds of the daytime—birds of the night.

VIII.

Foremost and bluest,
Type of the truest,
Cometh the bluebird heralding change;
Never come mortals
Back to old portals
Gladder than bluebirds do to old range.

IX.

Robin the Redbreast
Seems to have dread lest
Never his sweet song all will be sung;
Daybreak he trilleth,
Eventide filleth
Full of the magical notes of his tongue.

X.

Yellow as gold is
Wondrously bold is
Oriole building out on the tips—
Out where the straying
Winds will blow, swaying,
Swinging her hammock proof against slips.

XI.

Old haunts reviewing,
Old loves renewing,
Swallows come twittering under the sky—
Not till the gloaming
Do they cease roaming,
Not till the night fall chimneyward fly.

XII.

Then when night falleth
Whippoorwill calleth
Piping thrice iterate notes that are quaint;
If in the nearness,
Strong in their clearness,
If the farness, flutelike and faint.

XIII.

Lo! how the sombre
Woodlands encumber
All of their tree tops thickly with leaves—
Looms where the sunshine
Fabric that's spun fine
Through the long summer silently weaves.

XIV.

White camps of apple
Green valleys dapple,
Floating their banners high in the sun,
Camps where hereafter
Jubilant laughter
Witness shall be of victories won.

XV.

Fair as blush laden
Cheek of a maiden,
Hued like a sea shell charming us so,
Crabtrees their blushing
Petals are flushing—
Dashes of dawn laid lightly on snow.

XVI.

Winter's sleep ended
Beauty that's splendid
Bursts from the cerements chrysalids wear;
Type of that urgent
Season when surgent
Nations shall meet the Lord in the air.

XVII.

While the night shadows
Gloom o'er the meadows
Scintillant fireflies rise from the grass,
Seeming like sparkling
Stars that shoot darkling,
Swift to be lost in solitudes vast.

XVIII.

When the cock croweth
While the day groweth,
Rises the farm boy ruddy as wine,
Rises and ranges
Over the granges,
Up from the grassland driving the kine.

XIX.

Forth to their sowing
Farmers are going,
They of the wheatland, oatland and corn;
Oft while the dayspring
Plumeth its gray wing
These are out breathing the fragrance of morn.

XX.

Children are playing
All the day staying
Out where the sunshine warmeth the air,
Gathering of pleasure
Bountiful measure,
Bearing no burdens, knowing no care.

XXI.

Sunshine and showers!
Foliage and flowers!
This is Love's season—look at the birds!
Lo! from his portal
Man the immortal
Goeth awooing, saying sweet words.

XXII.

Praises I bring thee,
Spring, and I sing thee
Paeans of gladness chorused with mirth;
Glad all the birds are,
Glad all the herds are,
Glad all the people, glad the whole earth.

HIEROGLYPHICS OF GOD.

(“They are the Hieroglyphics of God.”—ARCHBISHOP TRENCH.)

Classicus.

Why all of this toiling in nature—
This study of flowers and rocks?
What profit can come to the watcher
By night, of the heavenly flocks?
Why gather the life of the ocean,
The life of the land and the air?
Why follow the wind and the lightning
In search of their mystical lair?

Physicus.

Most gladly I answer your questions,
O delver in classical lore,
Whose joy is the study of language
Brought out of oblivion's store.
You linger o'er human inscriptions
Exhumed from the crypt and the clod,
We study the language of nature—
The hieroglyphics of God.
These beautiful flowers that blossom
And grow without limit or dearth,
Which after the winter come teeming
From hidden recesses of earth,
Bring message to us of the rising
Of long sleeping men from the sod,—
This message is written in flowers—
The hieroglyphics of God.

The globe is a hoary old volume
Whose leaves are the layers of stone,
And on them in letters of fossil
The tale of the ages is strewn;
To read it we gather the fossils
And tracks where the Saurians trod,
And bring them in patience together—
The hieroglyphics of God.

Above us the scroll of the heavens
For patient translation is spread,
And mighty in bright constellations
Can the tale of the kosmos be read;
By scanning the sky thro' the centuries
While other men slumbering nod,
The watchers unravel their meaning—
Those hieroglyphics of God.

We gather the life of the ocean,
The life of the land and the air,
And patiently search for the kinship
That each to the other does bear;
No matter how strangely constructed,
No matter how common, how odd,
These creatures are chapters of record
In hieroglyphics of God.

The wind and the lightning we study
Tho' mystery their origin shroud:
The one is born of the sunshine,
The other is born of the cloud;

They both may be caged for a moment
And energize bellows or rod,
But both are the symbols of spirit
And hieroglyphics of God.

Your puzzles were gendered by mortals,
Your problems invented by men,
Who tarried awhile in the earth life
Then vanished forever again.
But ours have Author undying
Whose pen is a magical rod:
Forever His scroll of the heavens is spread—
Forever His flowery page to be read—
Forever His fossils discourse of the dead—
All hieroglyphics of God.

January, 1888.

TO A COMET.

O wanderer from where dost thou come to my sight
And whither art going so radiantly robed?
Hast been to the uttermost limits of night,
And far into Nature's deep mysteries probed?

No answer! No speech! O mysterious thing
That burnest thy torch in the heavenly spans!
Far from me my boasting of wisdom I fling
And bowing I bury my face in my hands.

1887.

THE HOEMAN'S PROTEST.

(In answer to Markham's "Man With the Hoe.")

Assailed, maligned, called "thing" and "shape"
and "slave"

And "brother to the ox," to make protest
And fling the impeachment back, I stand today
To plead my cause before a juried world.

In terms of legal lore this is my brief:

*One skilled in art saw me one day afield,
Rough-shod, unkempt and bending o'er the clods,
And limned me so, making me as I seemed
That selfsame hour. Later a †poet's eye
Fell on the work the painter's hand had wrought,
And he was set to musing. Then he wrote,
Wrote metred lines high on the peaks of song,
Seeing, not me a living figure formed
Of flesh and blood and filled with breath of God,
But my poor picture motionless and dead.

The painter meant me type specific, saw
One phase of many featured life and fixed
It on his canvas—copying sober fact.
The poet made me type generic, saw
At second hand the painter's glimpse of truth,
Then wrote at random—following fancy's train.

O juried world before whose bar I stand,
I pray you patience while I make my plea.
Hear ye a parable. One day at eve
One skilled in art looked on the low-hung moon,

*Jean Millet.

†Edwin Markham.

A crooked rim above the western hills,
And limned its likeness on his seamless cloth.
In after years somewhere 'mid cloistering walls
That painter's sketch a poet's fancy charmed
And woke his muse to sing in lofty strains:
*This is the moon, a poor, pale crooked form,
The relic of a once majestic world
In outstretched arms holding her fossil self.*

Would you, O world, subscribe the sentiment,
Would you those lines applaud as all the truth,
Who o'er and o'er above the eastern hills
Have seen the moon in full-orbed splendor rise
And yield rich radiance thro' night's sunless hours?

Such pictures, beautiful tho' they be and true,
Portray at best for man and moon alike
A single phase; but moons and men have both
A thousand phases, changing hour by hour,
And many a phase have I.

Lo! while I speak
I am no longer bending o'er the clods,
But stand erect with brow upturned to heaven
And plead my cause, a very son of God
Tho' leaning on the hoe.

I am no craven.
When bugles blow and herald voice is heard
Crying the call to arms and war's alarm,
None sooner hears or better soldier makes
Nor ever has in any age. Behold,
From field and plow and peaceful rural scenes

Came Cincinnatus and great Washington!
I am no dullard. Countless of my kind
Have worn with pride the scholar's cap and gown,
Adorned the judge's bench, the bishop's seat,
And added luster to the thrones of kings.
I am no underling. I am the staff
On which the whole world leans. I am the stock—
The old Edenic stock—from which have sprung
All other tribes of men. I am indeed
The seedcorn of the race.

And know ye this:

From Eden until now, from Adam's self
Unto his latest born, the hoe has been
The sign of toil appointed me of God,
But I who bear it, battling with the clods,
Am not therewith disgraced. I may bend o'er—
I must to wield the hoe—and so be found,
Begrimed, unkempt and clad in coarsest garb,
Yet Kings and Monarchs have not bowed me down,
Nor am I serf dependent on their boon:
I am the freest of all the sons of men
And richest I of all my kith and kin;
Of Nature's dower 'round me everywhere,
My heritage the first-born's double share.

The trades of other men are all their own
And have their limitations, hedging life
In meagre metes and bounds, but this of mine,
Given of God, has neither hedge nor hem,
Goes on when others cease, owns earth and air,
The dews of morn, the frequent showers of rain,

The blessed light of oft recurring suns,
And, best of all, the infinite Father's care.

So I protest and fling the impeachment back.
I, son of Adam, first born son of God,
Am not a "slave," a "brother to the ox,"
"A thing that grieves not and that never hopes."
I am the central figure in all the world
Which the horizon bounds, and other men
Attend me as the planets do the sun;
From me they draw all bounty, all support,
And in my failure find their surest loss.

—August, 1899.

LORD OF ALL LIFE.

Lord of all life, be thou the Lord of mine,
Help me to know, in service such as thine,
Is happiest lot that mortal can possess—
In serving thee is truest happiness.

Lord of all life, of mine be thou the Lord
Till death do clip this earthlife's tenuous cord,
And then in heaven thy royal throne before
Let me still serve, and serving, thee adore.

Lord of all life, of mine the Lord be thou
Till fails the form I wear in service now,
And when I yield fore'er this vital breath
Still let me serve beyond the bounds of death.

1894.

CURFEW WILL BE RUNG AT NIGHT.

O'er the hills the sun was setting, (many a year had
taken flight
Since that maiden triumphed, saying "Curfew shall
not ring to-night,")
But the sexton long so faithful did not ring the
curfew bell
As the twilight shadows lengthened and the hush
of evening fell;
Since the morning sun had risen he had lost his
mortal might
And could only lie and murmur: "Curfew can not
ring to-night."

It was summer, and his couch was placed beside a
latticed case
So the cooling winds could enter and blow o'er his
pallid face.
Now around and o'er that lattice grew a vine of
living green
All so densely interwoven that no sunlight came
between,
But a passing happy maiden, rosy as the western
light,
Caught the old man's feeble murmur: "Curfew
can not ring to-night."

They were friends, the man and maiden. In the
days forever flown

He had told her many a story of the trials he had
known;
So his troubled lamentation took a firm hold on
her mind
And her heart and hands enlisted in a secret
service kind,
For she forthwith turned her footsteps to the belfry
full in sight,
Ran and rang the evening curfew as it long had
been at night.

When the deep reverberations of the mighty
clanging tongue
Of the bell that quaked and quivered as it to-and-
froward swung,
Rolled and rippled thro' the lattice to the couch
whereon he lay,
Then a look of sweet surprisal o'er his face began
to play,
And he said: "Good woman, tell me who it is that
knows my plight
And is in the belfry ringing dear old curfew bell
to-night?"

Answered then the old wife: "Goodman, I know
not who rings the bell;
May be elves or fairies ring it—but I'm sure I can
not tell."
Answered then the old man nothing, but in mood
to death akin

Lay in peace and listened—listened to the sonance
floating in;
Thus he lay and listened—listened till had faded
day's last light
And the moon had grown resplendent in the fore-
ground of the night.

When it ceased the old man whispered: "I shall
hear those tones no more;
When again the curfew soundeth, I'll be on the
other shore.
I have tried to do my duty, tho' my lot has lowly
been,
Yet the throng at church will miss me as it wanders
out and in;
If 'twere fairies rang this evening ere my spirit
took its flight,
Men will know I'm dead to-morrow and the curfew
ring at night."

With the morrow came the maiden asking for her
aged friend,
And she found him lying lifeless. Straightway
hurrying forth again,
She informed the nearest neighbors, those who
long the man had known,
That betwixt the dark and dawn their aged ringer's
soul had flown.
Then in gathered all the people and performed the
usual rite

With that form of kindness fostered where the
curfew rings at night.

Then 'twas asked: "Who rang the curfew at sun-
set yestere'en?"

And the old wife briefly answered: "May it not
have fairies been?"

I know not that any mortal knew my gooodman's
stricken state,

And—perhaps 'twas elves or fairies rang the bell
last eve at eight."

Then this woman's idle fancy took the wings of
truth for flight,

And 'twas told for fact that fairies rang the curfew
yesternight.

Some one fond of story telling said that on the
ivied wall

He had watched the fairies clambering till they
reached the belfry tall,

Then like bees in swarming clusters on the rope
some hung to pull

While some scaled the vines of ivy in the moon-
light fair and full

And sat on the rolling axle as the bell rocked left
and right,

Ringin' the evening curfew as it long had done at
night.

When 'twas noised thro' all' the country that the
curfew bell was tolled

By the tiny hands of fairies for the dying sexton
old,
Then the old man who, while living, to the world
was scarcely known,
Had his name and deeds and sayings, like sweet
odors, widely blown;
Like the bell he'd hung in silence thro' the living
hours of light
And was heard of only after came the slumbering
hour of night.

Ah! 'tis so in every station! After life has fled the
frame,
Men are prone to laud the fallen and to magnify
the name!
All thro' active years unnoticed, many a mortal
lowly lives,
And at last in Nature's order back to God the
spirit gives;
Yet the lowliest dead are noticed if they've lived
at all aright—
When the daylight turns to darkness—CURFEW
WILL BE RUNG AT NIGHT.

—1877.

AUTUMN CONCEIT.

When Autumn kisses Golden Rod
She coyly hangs her head,
Whereat the Sumach is ashamed
And blushes scarlet-red.

AT LIFE'S HIGH NOON.

Standing upon the crest of years
 Meted to mortal man,
I see the far off shores that bound
 The slopes on either hand.
'Tis life's high noon and o'er my head
 The sun in splendor shines,
My shadow on life's dial plate
 Has reached the shortest lines.

Yonder the sea—the sea of Birth—
 Within whose harbors ride
The barks of men who enter in
 Upon the rising tide;
And yon the sea—the sea of Death—
 Whence while the waters fall
The barks of men go out again
 To come no more at all.

I know the eastern slope of life,
 Now memory's garden green;
I see the mileposts I have passed
 And all the way between;
But down the foreway sloping swift
 Toward the Western sea;
I know not what of joy or grief
 May be in store for me.

AFTER THE STORM, PEACE.

Lo! 'long the East are gathered snow white clouds
In mighty heaps than mountains far more tall,
And thro' them leaps anon the lightning's flash
Illuming far and wide this earthly ball.

Few hours ago the storm king passed o'erhead,
Frighting the world with thunders loud and long;
And gave the earth as precious recompense
Swift slanting drops that fell in countless throng.

Now night has come and in the zenith high
The radiant moon—fair Dian's silvern boat—
'Mid fleecy clouds as white as driven snow
Like flying barge seems ceaselessly to float.

The air is cooled, and to its softest kiss
As lover fond I bare my blushing cheek,
While far away my eyes admiring watch
The lightnings leap o'er many a snowy peak.

God's peace abides throughout a slumbering world,
In yonder moon that peeps thro' clouds apart,
And in the sense of deep composure sweet
That comes to me: God's peace is in my heart.
—1889.

LIFE IS WHAT WE WILL TO MAKE IT.

Life is what we will to make it,
There is no such thing as Fate:
There's a Heaven—we may forsake it
Or go in at the pearly gate.

AFTER TWENTY YEARS.

Aft twenty years of life together
Thro' every kind of wind and weather,
Returns the day:
Dearest, I'm glad I wooed you then,—
Turn back the years and I'd woo again
The selfsame way.

If fancy in that far beginning
Played ample part with love in winning
Our hearts' agree,
To-day I'm sure that fancy's naught
And only truest love is aught
To you and me.

'Tis strange how love two hearts can tether,
Then draw those hearts more close together
Thro' fleeting years,
Until at length they beat as one,
Their pulsing tides together run
Thro' smiles and tears.

'Tis strange, and yet there's no denying
Love's power to do in souls undying
His wondrous things;
Like Death he enters the peasant's hut,
Nor 'gainst him can the door be shut
In homes of kings.

I pity much that lonely human,
I care not whether man or woman,
Whom love hath missed;

Unknown to such the joy that slips
From soul to soul when lover's lips
Are lover-kissed.

Twice ten the years of joy and sorrow
Since we were wed, and on the morrow
Returns the day:

Dearest, I'm glad I wooed you then,—
Turn back the years and I'd woo again
The selfsame way.

—December 26, 1897.

ABOVE THE MISTS IS SUNLIGHT.

(“Be Not Cast Down.”—Psalms x-ii.)

The vales down which you journey
May be obscured in mist,
While all the hills above you
By sunlight sweet are kissed;
Not infinite toil would help you
Scatter those mists away,
But climbing a little higher
Will bring you cloudless day.

So when the gloom of sorrow
Hangs thick about your soul,
And life's beset with troubles
Which you can not control,
What use to be dejected?
Go up Faith's hills upon
And there undimmed as ever
Behold the Eternal Sun.

AT A CHURCH WEDDING.

God's house is thronged. The expectant crowd
is waiting

To hear the vows of plighted man and maid;
Tho' old the scene, its charm knows no abating
And pleases yet as when in Eden laid.

The altar wears unwonted wealth of flowers,
Before whose front the surpliced priest appears;
The organ rains its notes in joyful showers
And the wedding march the hushing audience
hears.

Thro' wide-thrown doors at length the ushers enter
And tread the aisles with steady step and slow;
Then come the twain in whom all interests center,
Whose lives henceforth as one the world must
know.

The music slumbers, but the hush is broken
By quiet words of priest and groom and bride,
As one by one the marriage vows are spoken
The ring is given and the nuptial knot is tied.

Then music wakes and bride and groom go slowly
From altar front toward the outer door,
Henceforth to live in that estate most holy
Ordained of God in sinless days of yore.

And then the throng makes haste to follow after,
Crowding the doors now full wide open flung,
And everywhere is heard the sound of laughter
While merry peals from wedding bells are rung.

COEQUAL MATES.

At the last of those long epochs
When the Cosmos was create
God the Maker pitying Adam
In his lordly lone estate,
Gave him Eve, the first of women,
Made his latest gift the best,
Ere he entered on the sabbath
Of his uncreating rest.

Adam was the lord appointed
Over every brute and tree,
But the Lord gave Eve to Adam
His coequal mate to be.
He was king, by Heaven empowered,
Over all on sea or land;
She was queen and her dominion
Was as wide as his command.

He the stronger, she the weaker,
In the outer make and mold;
He the coarser, she the finer,
In the spirit's inner fold;
He excelled where brawn was needed,
She in tenderness prevailed,
But they both bore equal courage
And in wisdom neither failed.

Each one had appointed duties,
Served an equal part in life:
Each was to the other lover—
He the husband, she the wife;

He the father, she the mother,
Both by family cares were tried,
Both the burden bore of sorrow
When their murdered Abel died.

Their dominions they transmitted
To the coming tribes of men,
And today the world should show us
Their coequal lives as then.
Man should be the lover, husband,
Father, son and kindly brother;
Woman be the sister, daughter,
Sweetheart, wife and patient mother.

All of Adam's sons should cherish
All the daughters Eve hath borne
As coequals and companions—
Their eternal liege-lords sworn;
Then the lost estate of Eden
Would return in beauty bright,
And the world would once more revel
In the old Edenic light.

—1897.

AS MAN WILLS.

From a block of marble comes an angel or devil
Born of the sculptor's skill—
And so from a man comes an angel or devil
Just as the man may will.

CRADLE SONG.

Sleep, baby, sleep!
Upon thy mother's breast
Where thou art cradled best
Lie still and be at rest—
Sleep, baby, sleep.

Sleep, baby, sleep!
While mother rocks and sings
Fold up thy restless wings
And take the gift she brings—
Sleep, baby, sleep.

Sleep, baby, sleep!
Thy mother's arms are strong,
And 'mid life's busy throng
She'll fend thee from all wrong—
Sleep, baby, sleep.

Sleep, baby, sleep!
Thine eyes are closed at last
And all thy woes are past;
Mother will hold thee fast—
Sleep, baby, sleep.

—1892.

AN AUTOGRAPH.

In the emerald fields of memory,
Where no winters ever be,
Plant the sweetest flower thou knowest
And cherish it for me.

THE CLOCK'S MONITIONS.

I hear the beat of a restless heart
Which day and night keeps going,
And hour by hour its wondrous power
Compels a voice from the upper tower
To tell how time is flowing.

Just now it sounded the hour of nine,
Thro' the starlit silence calling,
The cares of day have been laid away
And white robed forms have kneeled to pray
And now to sleep are falling.

But ere I sleep I fain would write
What thoughts that heart is telling
As to and fro, now high, now low,
It ceases not to come and go
Time's death forever knelling.

'Tis strange the heart of a senseless thing
Should set my brain to thinking,
And by its beat rouse memories sweet
And send my soul on fancy's feet
Strange thoughts in order linking.

That restless heart one solemn truth
From nature keeps repeating:
Here is no stay by night or day—
In one brief hour of time we say
Our farewell and our greeting.

"COME YE BLESSED."

(Written the day after the death of Frances E. Willard.)

"Come ye blessed of my Father"—hark! the
heavenly herald calls
From the battlements of heaven, standing on the
outer walls;
Every day the angel calleth—every hour the
trumpet sounds
And the summons flies insistent unto Earth's re-
motest bounds.

"Come ye blessed of my Father"—station stayeth
not, nor age,—
His are all the pure in spirit—prince and peasant,
serf and sage,
Prattling infant in the cradle, silent sovereign on
the throne,
Each alike obeys the summons when the angel's
trump is blown.

"Come ye blessed of my Father"—yester came
the mighty call
From the angel who is herald standing on the outer
wall—
All the battlements were crowded where the
heavenly herald stood:
They were gathered there to welcome one of
earth's supremely good.

“Come ye blessed of my Father”—they were look-
ing forth intent
As the children do at evening when the busy day
is spent,
Who are waiting for the coming of a soul to them
akin
That has spent the day in serving and at night is
coming in.

“Come ye blessed of my Father”—Frances Willard
heard the call
And her saintly spirit hastened to her kindred on
the wall;
Down the distance they beheld her coming thro’
the twilight space—
All the joy of homeward going written plainly on
her face.

“Come ye blessed of my Father”—O the greeting
that they gave
When she entered thro’ the portals and stood on
the golden pave!
Saints and angels gathered ’round her, and her
Elder Brother smiled
While the Father stooped and kissed her, saying
“Welcome home, my child.”

—February 19, 1898.

CROSSING THE BAR.

Where meet the floods of sea and river
Along the ocean's strand,
The sailor finds a hindrance ever—
An unseen bar of sand.

The river bears its burden seaward, the ocean
flings it back,
And so a bar is builded ever across the river's track.

Aye, builded once 'tis builded ever,
Unceasing night and day,
This bar between the sea and river—
The threshold of the bay;

There low it lieth 'neath the waters, concealed
from sun and star,
And only the pilot born beside it can surely cross
the bar.

Inside that bar the tempest dieth
And men may calmly sleep,—
Beyond the bar forever lieth
The great unmeasured deep.

On either side that hidden barrier betwixt the land
and sea

The bark that beareth precious burden from peril
may be free.

But never a tireless ocean rover,
Sailing toward the land,
Attempts to cross that barrier over
Without a pilot's hand;

And never a ship sails down the harbor going to
climes afar

Without the hand of a trusty pilot to guide it over
the bar.

Ah! many a vessel wrecked and broken,

Its crew and cargo lost,

Along the bar gives silent token

What recklessness hath cost.

Proud souls in their own powers trusting no pilot's
cunning sought,

And lo! the ribs of wreck discover what fate their
folly wrought.

Lo! there's a bar of another order

But the semblance is complete,

Which hidden lies along the border

Where youth and manhood meet:

Inside the bar is childhood's harbor, beyond it
manhood's sea,

And at the hidden bar between them the direst
perils be.

This bar is strewn with vessels human

Who would no pilot brook,

And many a man and many a woman

All hope just here forsook.

If ever a pilot's hand is needed to make this life
complete,

'Tis at the bar which all must traverse where youth
and manhood meet.

1894.

DEAD LEAVES IN THE WIND.

I saw dead leaves one day scurrying before the
blast,

Rustling around my feet and swiftly hurrying past.
Few days ago they'd hung high on the forest
trees

Drinking the sunshine in and laughing in the
breeze;

They'd hung a living host as countless as the stars
Or as the grains of sand along the ocean bars,
And every single leaf in all that countless host
Was doing its wonted work at its appointed post.

Alas! how glory fades! The frost king came by
night

And smote that leafy host with all his cruel might.
When noonday came again the carnage was wide-
spread

And leaf on leaf the ground was covered with the
dead;

Their faded banners torn and trailing in the dust
Were made the merry sport of every passing gust,
And 'neath the barren trees which yesterday they
crowned

The wanton winds took hold and whirled them
'round and 'round.

As they went scurrying on—those leaves before
the blast—

Rustling around my feet and swiftly hurrying past,

I thought of frightened birds whose wings are
wounded sore
Fleeing in broken flight some dreadful foe before;
For wounded birds some sense of sympathy would
start,
And I perchance would weep, aye, heart would
beat with heart,
But for those fallen leaves all withered, dead and
dry,
I had no tears to shed, I did not even sigh.
1894.

EVERY LITTLE HELPS.

One little beam of sunshine
Crept thro' a lattice closed
And fell upon a cushion
On which a babe reposed;
The child on waking saw it
And laughed in merry mood:
And so a beam of sunshine
Accomplished something good.

1875.

FAITH.

There's many a soul goes over the billowy sea
And knows no more of him that guides the ship—
The pilot at the wheel—than do we all
Of Him who steers the bark of life across
The stormy gulf of time; yet there is One
With watchful eye—somewhere—at the helm.

ILLUSTRIOUS LIVES.

A young oak grew at the rugged roots
Of a cluster of mighty trees,
Whose crowns majestic stood aloft
And caught the evening breeze.

It stood and gazed—this tender oak
Which grew at the rugged roots—
It stood and gazed at their lofty crowns
Which bore abundant fruits.

“I wish—I wish,” the young oak said,
“That I was tall as these,
So I might bear abundant fruit
And catch the evening breeze.”

And then the giant oaks that stood,
Their boughs with fruitage hung,
Looked down upon the tender oak
Growing their feet among,

And kindly whispered: “We as thou
Were once as small and tender,
And these old trunks so thick and stout
Were once as weak and slender;

“ ’Twas only after many a year
Of growth of branch and root,
That we attained the honor large
To bear abundant fruit.

“Be patient, child; ’tis Nature’s law
That we grow old and die,
But thou wilt rear in time thy head
As near the vaulted sky;

“And on thy crown as on ours now,
Shall hang abundant fruit,—
Thy leaves shall rustle in the breeze
When we lie low and mute.”

So spake the mighty oaks and ceased,
Whereat the young oak smiled
And said: “If all they say be true,
I’ll be a patient child;

“With highest aim I’ll look aloft
And woo the air and sun,
Nor will I be content to rest
Till place that’s best is won.”

1887.

AN EXHORTATION.

Live for the future that lieth before thee,
Live to bring honor to the mother who bore thee,
Live to win heaven bending high o’er thee.

He is most noble who in life just beginning
Turns head unto wisdom and heart unto winning
Heaven where biddeth neither sorrow nor sinning.

Up; while the day is before thee be doing!
Hasten; the peace of high heaven be wooing!
Spend not the future the bygone in rueing.

GAFFER.

Seeing the sky at sunrise red
An old man shook his hoary head—
"I fear a storm today," he said.

All day a hush hung over earth,
The birds forebore their songs of mirth;
Of sound and song there reigned a dearth.

The night drew on, and as it came
So faded out the western flame
As fades life's flush from a dying frame.

The old man sat the flue hard by
And watched the fire. A sudden sigh
Of wind came, weak as an infant's cry.

"Didst hear it, dame, didst hear the wail,
The first low cry of the coming gale?
A storm is born, by the Holy Grail!"

The sire arose and from the door
Looked out toward the ocean shore
Whence came a ceaseless sullen roar.

The sky o'er head was clear, tho' dim,
But on the sunset's purple rim
Stood clouds like mountains dark and grim.

The awful stillness that awhile
Had held the world in durance vile
Was flown before that frowning pile.

The wind that came along the lea
From o'er the face of the deep wide sea
Tickled the child at the old man's knee.

Tickled the child because the air
Brought coolness to her cheeks so fair
And ran its fingers thro' her hair.

But the old man groaned and heaved a sigh
Hearing the wind's low ominous cry
As thro' the house it hurried by.

He'd heard that sound full many a time
And knew 'twas more than a merry chime
As full of joy as a festal rhyme.

He knew 'twas stern as pledges said
By living souls around the bed
Of one about to join the dead.

The rising wind's subdued refrain
Foretold the storm king's fearful reign
And ruin wrought on land and main.

Now and again a fitful flush
Would over the rugged cloud peaks rush
As over a maiden's cheek a blush.

"O Gaffer," the grandchild sweetly said,
As back she tossed her curly head,
"I know what makes the clouds flash red.

"The angels have their homes inside
And light their lamps at eventide
As we do here where we abide.

"And when an angel opens his door,
His lamp light flashes out before
And makes the clouds look red all o'er."

The Gaffer smiled and placed his hand
On the curly head that so simply planned
Reason for what men scarce understand.

Soon turning back he closed the door,
Sat in his chair the fire before
And told his grandchild's sayings o'er.

And then he spoke of the signs without,
How ominous blew the wihs about
And said there'd be a storm no doubt.

An hour passed on, and in its flight
Came 'round the usual things of night:
Season of prayer and robes of white.

The gray haired sire his Bible spread
And from it as his wont was read
Of things the Master did and said.

Then kneeling with his family small
He offered up his human call
To Him who ruleth over all.

At first he prayed in feeble tone;
But with the night wind's rising moan
Grew more impassioned still his own,
Till it was anxious as the wail
Intoned without by the growing gale
So danger fraught to ship and sail.

One moment seemed the wind to cease:
Amid the calm he asked God's peace,
And all arose from off their knees.

After awhile the child was led
Enrobed in white to her little bed
After her childish prayer she'd said.

But unto them, the older grown,
Came slumber not; they heard the moan
Of winds around them fiercely blown.

They sat in silence an hour through
While wailed the winds within the flue
That made them wail in spirit, too.

And then again across the floor
The old man went and oped the door
Looking toward the ocean shore.

No child now stands beside his knee,
But on his arm stands leaning she
Whose love was his while life should be.

"Good dame," he said, "the wind is wild,
And the lightning plays in fitful style
As o'er a madman's face a smile.

"I fear some ship from out this night
Will never more behold the light
Or sail thro' waters capped with white.

"Hark! hear you how the billows roar
Breaking along the beetling shore—
How often we've heard them thus before!

"The frowning heavens seem wildly rife
With fiercest elemental strife
As if they meant war to the knife.

"They do, good wife, you may depend:
Sailors a fearful night will spend
And some will never return again.

"Come in—Come in—that lurid gleam
Bedazzles me! How shrilly scream
The winds that 'round about us teem!"

They closed the door and barred it fast,
Then sat and talked of the varied past
Until the storm had ceased at last.

Then unto rest they stole away
To slumber till the light of day—
The old man and his good wife gray.

—1876.

CONSTANCY—AN AUTOGRAPH.

Beautiful snowflakes fill the air,
Then fall and melt in the river;
But moon and star in the sky afar
And the blazing sun in his golden car
Shine on the same forever.

Be not, good friend, like snowflakes frail
That fall and melt in the river,
But like the stars that never pale
And the sun and moon, until the wail
Of earth shall cease forever.

DYING CHILD.

Sad and lonely in her cottage when the day was
cold and drear

And the sky was so beclouded that no sunshine
could appear,

Sat a woman busy only in the chambers of her mind,
For she had no strong companion she could talk
with, speaking kind.

O'erspreading all her features was a look of deep
despair

And her forehead full was furrowed with the marks
of carking care;

But her eyes so dark and weary were not wet with
briny tears

As she sat there sad and lonely 'mid the silence
and her fears.

"Mother!" says a voice so faintly that it scarce had
reached another

Than the ear of loving woman, of a listening, loving
mother,

And a little form was stirring and a little hand was
seen

On the covering thin and ragged of a couch
appareled mean.

Swiftly as a woman ever, when the call of love is
made,

Goes to answer, so she hasted; and her hand was
gently laid

On the pale brow of her darling, while that tender
look of love
Which can come from woman only bent his wasted
form above.

"Mother, lift me up and let me see the sunshine,"
whispered he,
As he tried her neck to circle as in days that used
to be;
But she said, "There is no sunshine," with a bitter
sob of pain—
"Kiss me, then," he said, "and call me when the
sunlight comes again."

Then upon his pallid forehead lovingly she pressed
a kiss,
And she knew her child was going soon to other
world than this,
And her only source of solace, (for she had no
earthly friend,)
Was to pray that she might follow where all pain
and parting end.

Down she sat again to ponder and to whisper with
her thoughts,
While the sums of things she added made but
round and worthless naughts;
And the day so cold and cheerless changed to
doubly cheerless night,
While the things then seen but faintly now went
wholly out of sight.

While in darkness sat she thinking, loud her boy
in rapture cried:

"Mother! Mother! see the sunlight!" Then she
hurried to his side,

Saying "No, not here is sunlight—all is darkness
in this place,"

But the child persisted saying: "It is shining in my
face."

"You are dreaming," then she told him, but the
child that clasped her hand

Whispered, "O how sweet the music, and the sun
how bright and grand!"

"No, 'tis dark, 'tis night," she faltered, but her
darling did not hear

For his soul had gone forever where the skies are
always clear.

By the margin of the river that we call the stream
of death

He had seen the light he spoke of with his very
latest breath,

Light that streamed beneath the curtains which
the angels raised for room

Where the little one could enter when he reached
the heavenly home.

—Yale College, May 13, 1876.

GEORGE WASHINGTON.

As long as the stars shall glitter in heaven,
As long as the cloud and sunshine are given,
As long as the bow shall stand in its beauty
And serve as a sentinel doing his duty,
To silently tell to the children of men
That danger from deluge can come not again,
So long in the earth shall thy memory abide,
So long shall thy name be remembered with pride,
O thou who art foremost of glory's great ones—
Thou grandest and best of Columbia's sons—
George Washington.

Strong men are inspired at mention of thee
To do and to die, if necessity be,
For all that is holy, for all that is just,
For liberty's heritage left to their trust;
And children are filled with as noble desires
As those that inspirit the souls of their sires,
When mention is made or in story or song
Of all that thou didst in the battle with wrong,
Thou manliest man, thou God-given chief,
Freedom's evangel to a nation in grief,

George Washington.

—1889.

AFTER.

After the sunset, darkness;
After the dawning, day;
After the earthlife, Heaven—
Win it while you may.

IN THE CHAPEL CHOIR.

I sat today in the chapel choir—
My long accustomed place—
And sang as is my wont to sing
Of Christ's redeeming grace,
And in the space that spread before
Was many an upturned face.

Thro' all the throng I looked in vain
For wonted votaries there,
Nor could I catch their voices strong
In each familiar air;
I looked in vain through all the kirk
For one face heavenly fair.

Full many a Sabbath day serene
Up there in the choir loft,
I'd watched the worshippers come in
With footfall sounding soft
As if they trod the tufted turf
Of some adjoining croft.

Meseems a kirk's a harbor locked
Against a restless sea
While all the days are going by
That twixt the Sabbaths be—
The restless sea of human life
That floweth ceaselessly.

But when the hallowed seventh day
On peaceful Nature smiles,
The kirk's unlocked, and tides of men

Flow 'mong the quiet aisles
And fill the pews, while music sweet
The tired soul beguiles.

The tides flow in—the tides flow out—
And voyagers come and go,
As freighted barks pass out and in
Where ocean's waters flow;
(The kirk is free from wrecking storm
And treacherous undertow.)

And so today from the choir loft
I saw the gates thrown wide,
And thro' those gates in quest of peace
Came in the tired tide
Of human life which all the week
Had washed their seaward side.

I scanned the throng, but all in vain,
For one familiar face
Whose wont had been on Sabbath days
To seek the sacred place;
Alas! we may not meet again
This side the throne of Grace.

Myself shall come and join the throng
On Sabbath days to be,
But in the throng that sits before
One face I'll never see—
Her face shall never turn again
Those gladsome eyes on me.

—1888.

SLEEP AND DEATH.

Did you ever wonder, wand'ring on the border
land of sleep:

Wherein differs this from dying and a venture on
the deep,

On the deep of that eternal, that supernal after-life
Where the frame is free from aching and the spirit
free from strife?

I have wondered under cover of the hovering wings
of sleep

While the slothful feet of slumber o'er my lids
began to creep:

In what mode or manner differs the descent to
transient peace

From the dreaded hour of dying and the spirit's
long release?

Now I fold the covers o'er me and in peace go
down to dreams

With as much of fearless pleasure as a swan to
summer streams,

Not a moment do I falter, for I know I go to rest
Where the body is unburdened and the weary
spirit blest.

And I know that when I waken I am never changed
at all

But am just the same in seeming as when into
sleep I fall;

So I draw the stern conclusion that, when Judgment
morn shall break,
As I was before I slumbered in that likeness I
shall wake.

Now I fall asleep to waken in a little while again
Unto other peeps of pleasure—unto other pangs of
pain;
Then my slumber will be longer, yea, thro' ages
long shall last
And will break to pain or pleasure in the eons
overvast.

If I do not dread this passing from my wakeful
hours of sense
Into inattentive slumber, but with pleasure hurry
hence,
Why should I with shudders tremble e'en to pass
from time and pain
To the sleep from which as mortal I shall never
wake again?

—Yale College, 1875.

LOOK UP.

Look up, not down. The sun o'erhead
Hangs high in God's blue heaven and burns
With constant fire thro' all the years:
Around us here are flowers and tears
And crumbling bones and burial urns—
Things earthly hang on slender threads.

IN MEMORIAM.

(Sophie Barre Irwin.)

My deathless self was yester filled with pain
 By saddening news:
As one is numbed by fall of wintry rain
So I was chilled and I could not restrain
 My eyelid's dew.

The tide of years—the tireless tide of years—
 Turned back apace,
Till I was past all present hopes and fears
And looked again, tho' dimly thro' my tears,
 On one sweet face.

A fair young girl whose presence made me glad
 Before me stood,
And learned with joy whate'er her teacher had
Of goodly store that strength and grace would add
 To womanhood.

I prized her then, as faithful teacher ought
 His pupil prize,
And often when with care those days were fraught
The sunshine of her happy face she brought
 And cleared my skies.

When one has found a prize of precious kind
 He holds it dear;
Tho' he may other precious treasures find,
That prize to lose he's less and less resigned
 Each added year.

Then if some day should come the news of theft
 Beyond restore,
Would it be strange that he should feel bereft
And with his heart by sorrow's arrows cleft
 His tears outpour?

Few were the words that caused my spirit pain
 When they were read,
Few were the words that fell like wintry rain
And chilled me thro' and thro'—these words of bane
 Were: "Sophie's dead."

Had sudden shock of swift electric fire
 That moment been
And touched my frame with hot and vengeful ire,
It had not brought me pang of pain more dire
 Than thrilled me then.

Today I mourn for her, "But not as those
 Who have no hope;"
Her sainted face the future shall disclose
And I shall find her, gracing like a rose,
 The heavenly slope.

—October 27, 1893.

THE INSISTENCY OF SONG.

Once—in the night—I heard a wild bird singing
 A snatch of its daylight song—
A little burst that tunefully came ringing
 Night's corridors along.

From out the silence deeply pre-existing
That wild bird's sudden note—
A brief sweet song forevermore insisting—
My sense of hearing smote.

'Twas hushed apace. As swift as it had risen
To charm the ears of men,
'Twas carcerate in its own little prison,
And silence reigned again.

But now and then from memory's shades upspring-
ing,
There comes again to me
The snatch of song I heard the wild bird singing—
The bird I could not see.

And so sometimes amid life's endless duty
Beset with shades along,
Suddenly there come to charm us with their beauty
Snatches of olden song,

—1889.

IT TOUCHED A CHORD.

In the holiest place where the cherubim
Their ceaseless vigils spent
Israel's High Priest but once a year
With fear and trembling went;
And no one else in that holy place
Could set profaning feet—
His priest alone to enter there
Jehovah counted meet.

Today I went to the house of God
Where people are wont to meet,
Bringing their gifts of prayer and praise
To lay at the Master's feet.
I heard the prayers the brethren prayed,
The sermon the preacher preached,
But only the song they sang at last
My inmost being reached.

The song they sang was an olden one—
Both words and tune were old;
(These new-made songs may silver be,
But the olden ones are gold.)
It touched a chord in my inmost self
Life's holiest things among,—
My mother was wont to sing that song
In the days when I was young.

'Tis strange methinks about this chord
In the inmost souls of men,
That only the faintest touch may wake
To sweetest thrills again;
By day the cadence of a song,
By night the wind's faint moan,
As if by magic may bring back scenes
We'd thought forever flown.

A tinkling bell or a singing bird,
Or an insect on the ground,
May reach the inmost souls of men
And cause the chord to sound;

In the crowded mart this chord may thrill
At sound of a stranger's tone,
Or in the silence of midnight hours
When a far off flute is blown.

Sometimes, alone, a strange sense comes
That naught of earth could bring,
Then I have thought this chord was moved
By the rush of an angel's wing;
Leastwise the look of a sainted face,
The sound of a silent tongue,
Were seen and heard, and the soul was glad
Its loved and lost among.

—1891.

“IN MEMORY OF ———.”

As o'er and o'er these words I read
Upon the moss grown, carven stones
That stood above the crumbled bones,
I fell to musing and I said:
“In memory of ———, and what is that
Of solace or of cheer? whereat
Resides today one knowing aught
That these low sleepers living wrought?

“None to be found? Then why aver
That so and so lies buried here?
If when I die, I have not done
Some deeds of good to bear me on

Adown the years, remembered well
By hearts that joy those deeds to tell,
O raise not o'er my moldering frame
A stone to recollect my name.

"Upon the hearts of living flesh
That thrill with all the thrills I felt
While in the flesh my spirit dwelt,
I'd like my memory ever fresh;
But if when I lie down alone
No heart but that of chiseled stone
Will cherish me, I'd rather fall
And be forgotten all in all."

I passed along. Another train
Of thought went thro' my pulsing brain:
"I ask perhaps too much, too much;
Not every one that lives can touch
The desk of Fame and with its pen
Write on the memories of men;
Most must be wise nor ask more boon
Than memory of a senseless stone.

"The sunbeams with a passing gleam
Come slanting down in ceaseless stream;
One may be caught by prismatic hand
And live in books in many a land,
But shall the rest, because they fall
And lose themselves in earth's great pall,
Refuse to shine? No; I am wrong—
I, one poor one of earth's great throng.

“Best fame indeed is that whose chime
Thrills human hearts o’er tide and time,
And still forever rings out and in
The e’er recurring tribes of men,
But than no fame, as millions have—
The orphan child—the patient slave—
Sure better fame it is to own
The memory of one faithful stone.

“And yet—and yet—I can not tame
A deep, unceasing thirst for fame;
I shudder at Oblivion’s dream
And would not cross o’er Lethe’s stream
To that void realm, but fain would tread
In memory’s fields when I am dead;
I want the hearts of men to keep
Memory of me when laid to sleep.”

—Yale College, 1876.

JACOB’S DREAM.

(Genesis xxviii, 12.)

A pilgrim fell to dreaming,
He saw a ladder stand,
One end against the heavens,
The other on the land;
And on that ladder wending
The heavens and earth between,
Ascending and descending
Angelic hosts were seen.

The pilgrim waked from dreaming:
In awe he looked around,
He'd found the gate of heaven
And slept on sacred ground;
To mark the spot he builded
An altar at the dawn,
Then vowed a vow at Bethel
Before he journeyed on.

Tho' many an age has vanished
Since Jacob slept and dreamed,
And saw this wondrous ladder
O'er which the angels streamed,
Yet unto weary pilgrims
Who walk the earth today,
The Father sends sweet comfort
In quite the self-same way.

The heavens still are bending,
Still earth is sacred ground,
God's saints are still ascending,
His angels coming down;
On land or sea they ever
Their sleepless vigils keep,
And every place is Bethel
Where God's beloved sleep.

THE MINSTREL OF THE AIR.

There dwells in air a minstrel rare:
Nor you nor I have seen him there,
 Yet many a day along the way
 Both you and I have heard him play.

Like tones of bells in distant dells
Sometimes his music swoons and swells;
 Sometimes 'tis more the sullen roar
 Of ocean on a far off shore.

Sometimes meseems he almost dreams
So gently forth his music streams;
 Then waking wide a surging tide
 Goes roaring 'round on every side.

When winds blow chill o'er vale and hill
His music soundeth loud and shrill;
 But when they blow with warmth aglow
 His music then is sweet and low.

When some soft breeze scarce stirs the trees
A hum is heard like swarms of bees;
 But when the gale is big with bale,
 Lo! sobbing moan and piercing wail.

Oft thro' the night, when skies are bright,
Or when the heavens are hid from sight,
 O'er field and spire he strikes his lyre
 And interludes day's voiceful choir.

Full many a maid almost afraid
Has heard this minstrel's serenade,—
 From dark to dawn thro' curtains drawn
 Has heard him playing on and on.

Full many a swain on lonely lane,
Catching this minstrel's eerie strain,
 Has touched his steed to quicker speed
 And hied him home past wood and mead.

And souls there are 'neath sun and star
Who've heard this harper from afar,
 And feigned his strains the faint refrains
 Of music on the heavenly plains.

O everywhere this minstrel rare
Dwells in the viewless clouds of air,
 And many an hour in ceaseless shower
 His music falls with mystic power.

—1899.

NATURE'S WORSHIP.

See! grass and bearded grain heads
 Keep bowing now and then,
As if they made obeisance
 And raised their heads again.
O why this ceaseless service
 In Nature everywhere?
'Tis thus the grasses worship—
 They bow their heads in prayer.

A MOURNING ROBIN.

I hear the plaint of a robin calling
Through all the dreary day;
The air is chill and rain is falling
And yet that robin keeps a-calling
His loved one gone away.

The nest they built has lost its jewel,
The mother bird is flown;
In broken plaint he makes renewal
Calling for her the precious jewel
But yesterday his own.

He calls, but there is no replying—
O day so damp and chill!
Upon the hillside she is lying
And to his call gives no replying—
O grave so deep and still!

Beside the mother calmly sleeping
Two little darlings bide;
God gave them for her tender keeping
And all of them are sweetly sleeping,
Sleeping side by side.

He could have borne the loss serenely
Of those two birdlings fair;
It is her loss who was so queenly,
Who made his days pass so serenely
That is so hard to bear.

And so the robin broken-hearted,
 'Mid chilling air and rain,
Keeps calling, calling his departed,
And O his call's so broken-hearted,
 My heart is filled with pain.

—March 18, 1895.

NIGHT BRINGETH REST.

The day is gone and night hath robed the world
 In sombre garb
Thro' whose dark folds from heavenly heights is
 hurled
 The lightning's barb.

The mighty boom of cloudland guns is heard
 In upper air,
And showers of shot that hurt not beast nor bird
 Fall everywhere.

I'm all alone. While falls the pattering rain
 On turf and dome,
I catch besides an old familiar strain
 Oft heard at home.

The cricket's song in endless monotone
 Thro' rain and night,
Like magic wand recalls the seasons flown
 With golden light;

And friends come back I shall not see again
 In fleshly mold,
But here tonight our spirits seem to blend
 Just as of old.

Strange power is this, the hours of sunless night
Seem to possess:

To bring again the scenes of youth and light
Our souls to bless.

My heart is glad, tho' all who hold me dear
Are far away,
Since sunless light has brought me better cheer
Than sunlit day.

And now to rest; mine eyes are heavy grown
And fain would close:

God grant the peace may always be my own
This night bestows.

—1888.

MOTHER LOVE.

O love so dear with title clear
To liege of men both far and near,
How can I bring my powers to sing
Thy praise enough—thou heavenly thing!

O rich and sweet, O more than meet
For sinners such as give it greet,
This love so pure that comes to cure
The many hurts men must endure.

Stars, moon and sun may cease to run
The orbits theirs long since begun,
But not till then the sons of men
Of mother love shall know the end.

—1892.

ODE TO SHAKESPEARE.

Great Bard of Avon, many the vanished years
Since ebb'd and flow'd thy wondrous tides of
song!

What countless eyes have shed earth's scalding
tears,

Feeling again thy soul's hot hate of wrong!
What timorous hearts have laugh'd at ghostly
fears,

Catching the strength that made thy heroes
strong!

Who taught thee thus to sing such deathless strains?
Whence came to thee such mighty grasp of
things?

What height gave view o'er such unbounded plains
With all their streams of errant serfs and kings?
Who led thy feet where fair Apollo reigns
That thou mightest quaff Pieria's fabled springs?

While bends the sky and burns yon blazing sun,
And glittering stars bedeck Night's sable brow,—
While sparkling rivers back to oceans run,
And human hearts to kindred hearts make vow,
Thy work, great bard, so all superbly done,
To Time's decree the knee shall never bow.

—1899.

"THE PIKERS AT HOME."

Pikers, all hail! Hail, "Pikers at Home!"

Hail the return of our festival day!

Hail to the watchword we bring as we come:

Piker once Piker is Piker for aye!

Some of us come from the toil of high noon,

Others have come from the eventide's gloam,

All of us count it both blessing and boon

Once more to meet with the "Pikers at Home."

Many the lands that are scattered o'er earth

Lustrous as stars that jewel the night,—

Best of them all is the land of our birth,

Bright as the sun with Freedom's clear light.

Close to the heart of this nation so proud

There is a spot 'neath heaven's high dome,

Whereat tonight is gathered this crowd

Seeking good cheer with the "Pikers at Home."

Here in the days that are vanished away,

Braving all dangers our forefathers encamped;

Here they came down to the close of their day,

Leaving their lives on their children enstamped;

Living they loved and were loved in this place,

Dying were buried deep down in its loam,

Over the limits of time and of space

They are still Pikers, yea, Pikers at Home.

Famous the song that was sung of Joe Bowers,

Lover of Sally and brother of Ike,

Song that was sung till this County of ours

Grew into statehood, the great "State of Pike."

Since those old days when the promise of gold
Proved for so many like bubbles of foam,
Much about Pike the world has been told—
Much about Pike and the Pikers at Home.

Good as the Garden of Eden this “state”—
Better her highways for buggy and bike;
Adam and Eve no apple e’er ate
Such as are grown in the orchards of Pike;
Finest her cattle, her corn and her wheat—
Sweetest her melon, her peach and her pome—
Never have people more good things to eat—
Witness this feast of the “Pikers at Home!”

Pikers, all hail! ’Tis good to be here,
Hailing each other with heartiest glee!
Rest is so sweet even once in a year
Under the shade of the old roof-tree!
Fill up your goblets, O brothers, again,
Pledge one another, wherever you roam,
Still to be always the truest of men—
True to old Pike and the Pikers at Home.
—December 16, 1898.

LUCK AND PLUCK.

When we fail, we cry: “Misfortune
Foils our every forward thrust.”
When we win, we say: “We did it”—
Then we give ourselves the credit,
And our hearts are full of trust.

—1878.

RESIGNATION.

I know not how soon my life shall be ended,
I know not what bows against me are bended
Nor how from death's darts I'm thus far defended.

I know that death's darts about me are flying—
For neighbors and friends about me are dying;
I see the new graves where dead ones are lying.

I know there's a shaft for me in death's quiver—
Some day my frail urn that arrow shall shiver
And leave it in ruins beside the dark river.

I dread not the stroke. I make no endeavor
To ward off the blow intended to sever
The bondage of earth and to free me forever.

Like eagle encaged I'm evermore turning
My eyes to the sun effulgently burning,
And longing to fly, this meaner life spurning,

—1889.

QUESTIONS FOR THE MATERIALIST.

Did the motes that danced in my brain last year
Transmit life's unnumbered events?
Can inanimate things by chance cohere
And make animate things with sense?

Does spirit find birth in material springs
That have but a temporal range?

Is memory a fruit of corporeal things
That cycle forever in change?

1883.

SONG OF THANKSGIVING.

The white moon peeps thro' my window blind
As I'm sitting alone tonight,
O'erthinking the years I have left behind
And the days that have taken flight.
My heart is full of a nameless thrill
That my life has been so sweet,
And I fain would hurry to Zion's hill
To bow at the Giver's feet.

The year just going has brought me boon
As rich as the years gone by:
The skies were clear at the harvest noon
When the golden crops were dry;
Abundant grain was garnered then
For the wintry days ahead,
And I thank the Giver of good to men
For supplies of daily bread.

No fell disease with ghastly shrouds
Has come in grim disguise;
No war has spread its baleful clouds
Athwart my azure skies;
But the dove of peace—the white winged dove—
Has built in my own rooftree,
And the breezes have floated the banner of love
O'er all my land and sea.

So now I'm singing as best I can
My glad thanksgiving song
To Him who holds me by the hand
And leads me safe along.

I am not worthy his smallest gift,
Yet He gives me large and free,
And so my song of praise I lift
For His goodness unto me.

—1883.

TO A YOUNG MAN.

(Who left his betrothed at the gate and went to get some cigars.)

Whatever test of things accounted best
Her life must stand,
Those selfsame things, whatever they may be
Of self demand.

If that dear girl unspotted from the world
Must ever be,
Thou, too, be clean—whatever sullies her
Will sully thee.

Since she on thee for all the years to be
Her life confers—
Her lips are pure, her very breath is sweet—
Keep thine as hers.

—April 5, 1896.

UNDER THE STARS.

Under the stars as they shine tonight
In the wide blue vault above me,
In fancy I hear the angel flight
Of dear ones vanished from mortal sight,
Who come again in this magic light
To whisper how they love me.

Under the stars as they gleam and glow
In the wide blue vault above me,
I can almost see as they come and go
As gently and white as the falling snow,
My loved and lost who have flown below
To whisper how they love me.

Under the stars on their nightly race
In the wide blue vault above me,
I almost feel on my upturned face
The kisses my angels delight to trace
As they come tonight from a throne of Grace
To whisper how they love me.

Under the stars on their sentinel beat
In the wide blue vault above me,
I feel in my breast as I walk the street
A strange deep sense of composure sweet—
The sainted make lighter my weary feet
As they whisper how they love me.

—1886.

WESTWARD.

All things have had but one intent
From far Creation's first event:
Man was the end when Time began,
And Time will end in perfect man.

The dawning of the human race
Was in an unknown Orient place;
As goes the day from eastern source,
The race has kept a western course.

What time approached Redemption's morn
And Christ in Bethlehem was born,
His star of all the stars the best
Led eastern wise men toward the west.

God's angels came from heaven by night,
Clad in their shining robes of light,
And over the land of Israel's pride
Broke first the gospel's morningtide.

Thence spreading west to Asia's bound
It crossed the sea and Greece was crowned;
It crossed a farther sea, and Rome
Became the gospel's ancient home.

O'er towering Alps still spreading west
It made the Gaul and Teuton blest;
Once more it crossed the sea and dwelt
Among the isles of Pict and Celt.

While centuries fled the gospel's light,
Broke through the gloom of sin's long night
And Hope woke men with her bright smiles
From Orient lands to British isles.

At length it crossed Atlanta's deep
And found a western world asleep;
Today that world has come to be
God's beacon light on land and sea.

Here on this glorious vantage ground
Is soon the knell of Time to sound?
No! Earth hath yet a mighty span
To where the gospel day began.

The East gave us—shall we not give
To those who farther westward live?
Shall we to them the day deny
Who in the westward shadows lie?

Through all the ages that have flown
No brighter day was ever known
Than this to us so all divine—
Yet brighter day than this shall shine.

Though Heaven forbid us see that day,
Forbid it Heaven that we should stay
The onward course of things foresent
To God's one, far, divine event.

—1899.

FROM UNKNOWN TO UNKNOWN.

Sail on, fair cloud, o'er the upper deep and do
Thy mission well!
From ocean thou hast come to fall as dew
Or gladdening rain, and then return unto
The ocean's swell.

So am I come from God's great unknown sea
On purpose sent;
And I as thou, O cloud, must faithful be
And then go down to God's eternity
When I am spent.

VICTORIA REGINA.

While ages roll and men abide,
While ebbs and flows earth's human tide,
When history's muse the past shall scan
And pen the great of every land,
Amid them all from earliest born
To him who lives the latest morn,
Among the sovereigns earth has known
No name shall shine above thine own—
Victoria.

Whilst over Britain thou hast reigned,
How many a realm has waxed and waned!
How many a monarch come and gone,
And yet, good queen, thou reignest on!
What folk beneath the sun has seen
For three score years a Christian queen?
What nation of the world has known
A reign so glorious as thine own,
Victoria?

And thou shalt reign. Pale Death may claim
The mortal form that bears thy name,
But that which thou hast earth bequeathed
With fadeless laurels shall be wreathed.
Above the world when thou art dead
In benediction thou shalt spread
Immortal hands and men will bow
For blessing then as they do now,
Victoria.

—1898.

THREE BLUES OF SPRINGTIME.

I found today in sunny nooks
Blue violets sweet and coy,
The earliest factors of the year
To give the sun employ;
They nodded under sheltered banks
As is their modest way,
And lent their beauty to the earth
Thro' all the vernal day.

Above them in the barren trees
The blue birds twittered glad,
And fluttering wooed in tender mood
The mate that must be had;
They first return from southern land
As harbingers of spring,
And weary hearts grow glad again
When they begin to sing.

And higher still the soft blue sky—
The azure arch above—
Is symbol of our Father's care,
His canopy of love.
This vaulted sky with sunny days—
The bluebirds flown from far—
The violets,—they are tokens all
How wide God's mercies are.

—1888.

FOR GREED OF EMPIRE OR OF GOLD.

Where battle's storm had passed with awful sweep,
I found a beardless boy among the dead,
With covering none save Heaven's azure deep,
And only earth as pillow for his head.

Sometime, somewhere, an inconsiderate lad
Heard martial music blown on piper's stem,
Looked where men marched in warlike trappings
 clad,
And gave his name to be as one of them.

He little thought he signed himself that day
To be henceforth a puppet and a slave,
To hear command and mutely to obey,
And find his portion in a nameless grave.

Here—'twas this morn—upon this gory spot
Grim squadrons stood, and he was with the rest
Drawn up in line to shoot at and be shot—
And he was shot—look how they tore his breast!

Poor mangled boy with face upturned and pale,
The things that charmed that day he signed his
 name

Were no defense where fell the iron hail
'Mid war's wild thunder and its withering flame.

Whose was the cause that brought him here to die?
Not his indeed, nor yet his father's fold;
His blood was shed beneath a foreign sky
For some one's greed of empire or of gold.

How long, O Lord, wilt Thou withhold Thy hand
Nor hinder those who send such boys afar
To wreck the peace of some unsinuing land
And risk their lives where war's grim chances are!

—May 23, 1900.

THE BULL AND THE BOAR.

(A Fable.)

Long time two beasts lived neighbors close—

A bull and a boar,

And the bull had proved to be bellicose

Often and o'er.

The bull would come in the boar's sight

And dare the boar to come and fight;

The boar was simply holding his right

And nothing more.

Years passed and those beasts lived neighbors
still—

The bull and the boar;

But the bull desired the boar to kill

More and more.

The bull remembered one time they met

When the boar's tusk in his side was set

And the wound then made was tender yet—

Tender and sore.

They eyed each other and stood apart—

The bull and the boar,

But neither was willing a war to start—

They'd warred before.

The bull he bellowed and shook his head
To scare the boar, but the boar instead
Charged on the bull and his tusks ran red
 With bullish gore.

The conflict was on it was plain to see
 As ne'er before;
The bull was as mad as he could be
 And so was the boar.
"I'll get you yet," the bull he cried,
"I'll see if you do," the boar replied,
And he gave him another dig in the side
 That made him roar.

They fought and they fought for many a day,
 The bull and the boar,
And the fight was mostly the boar's way
 Twelve weeks or more.
But the bull was big and his strength was great
And his heart was hot with the fire of hate;
At last he fell with all his weight
 On the little boar.

"Fair fight—let up," onlookers said,
 "Let's peace restore;"
But the bull he only shook his head
 And horned some more.
Between the thrusts he madly cried,
"He stuck his tushes in my side,
But worse than that he hurt my pride—
 This little boar."

And the fight went on to one event
Twixt bull and boar,
The boar fought till his strength was spent
Then fought no more.
The great big bull at last withdrew
And all the world went bellowing through:
"I've done what I set out to do—
I've killed the boar.',

"And why, O bull," onlookers asked,
"Did you kill the boar?"
And then this reason the bull unmasked
With a mighty roar:
"I killed the boar because his ground,
Tho' small in limits measured round,
Was richer than any I had found;
And when I wanted his wealth to share
He showed his tushes and raised his hair
Which made me mad and then and there
I swore, as only a bull can swear,
I'd kill the boar."

—March 17, 1900.

"DON'T CHEER, BOYS—THE POOR FEL-
LOWS ARE DYING."

O long and loud the cannon boomed by Santiago's
Bay,
And many a man of war went down that bloody,
bloody day.

From out the bay the Spanish ships ran smoking
black and fast,
Hoping to 'scape the frost that blights in battle's
wintry blast.

Then sailing West each did his best to get beyond
the reach
Of the Yankee ships which watched for them off
Santiago's beach.

But all too soon the fray began and fiery missiles
flew,
Which, falling on those Spanish ships, went pierc-
ing thro' and thro'.

Swift, one by one, those ships gave up the awful
race they ran,
The battle which the Yankees waged, too fierce
for ship and man.

From stem to stem grim horror reigned 'mid fire
and blood and death,
And men were dying everywhere by battle's
with'ring breath.

'Twas then the great-souled Phillips stood, his
men in triumph crying,
And said to them, "O boys, don't cheer—poor
fellows, they are dying!"

1899.

"WIFE OF BENEDICT ARNOLD."

(While a student in Sheffield Scientific School of Yale College in 1875 and 1876, I saw the above inscription on a tumbled down tombstone in the old cemetery at New Haven, Conn.)

A gravestone lay upon the ground
With weeds and grasses tangled 'round,
And when I turned it over and read
This terse inscription there was spread:
 "The wife of Benedict Arnold."

Then was I filled with large surprise,
Such as I could not well disguise,
To find upon a carven stone
A tarnished name so widely known—
 The name of Benedict Arnold.

At once I thought of all the shame
That clings about the traitor's name,
And cried: "Why should her ashes share
That which is shameful everywhere—
 The name of Benedict Arnold?"

If she was kind, if she was true,
If christian making small ado,
We can not tell. This silent stone
Makes this confession—this alone—
 "The wife of Benedict Arnold."

This simple stone about her saith
No name, no date of birth or death;
Here is inscribed one single thought
In chiseled letters plainly wrought:
 "The wife of Benedict Arnold."

O lasting shame! O deep disgrace!
Enough in life's all conscious race!
Why o'er her in unconscious sleep,
Upon a stone such memory keep:
"The wife of Benedict Arnold."

1891.

WIND AND TIDE.

How the waters quake and quiver
On the breast of lake and river,
How the treetops shake and shiver
When the breeze begins to blow!

How old ocean groans and grumbles,
How the water moans and mumbles
As o'er hindering stones it tumbles
When the tide begins to flow!

Whence the winds that wake the river,
Cause the lakes to quake and quiver,
Make the treetops shake and shiver—
Whence and whither, do you know?

Or the tide that moans and mumbles
As o'er hindering stones it tumbles
While old ocean groans and grumbles,
Why its strange mysterious flow?

1885.

TO THE NORTH WIND.

Blow loud, blow long, blow fierce and strong
O North wind icy cold!

Grasp all that's free, lock land and sea
In thy relentless hold.

Bring ice, bring snow, bring all thou know
Of winter's warlike things,
Yet by my hearth good Mistress Mirth
In sweet contentment sings.

Draw barb, draw blade, draw all that's made
To try the world outside,
Strike with thy might, hurt day and night
Till woe the world betide.

Make fears, make tears, make ills and cares,
Send troubles thick and fast,
Good Comfort's here and I've no fear
Of thy cold killing blast.

—1890.

REMEMBER ME.

My memory garden blooms with cherished friends
Whose lives inwrought some fragrance into mine;
Thy life a charm my memory garden lends,
And I would be among the charms of thine.
Remember me. In some fair flowery nook
Of memory's garden give a place for me,
Whereby flows Friendship's deep perennial brook
And over which Love sings her song of glee.

—1884.

NIGHT.

O lovely night! How in yon upper blue
The lamps of God do tremble as they stand
As footlights to a stage superbly grand,
But which not yet to sublunary view
Has been disclosed! And since to me and you
Appear no scenes of that becurtained land,
We'll look on these around on every hand.
How brightly gleam the sparkling gems of dew
Depending from a thousand graceful forms!
And list! there's whispering of the breathing air
As bending low it agitates the charms
Of these fair ones! Now all are free from care
And bide the time: they hold their jeweled arms
And calmly wait the silence signal there.

—Yale, 1875.

GOD'S WORK AND MAN'S.

My random gaze fell on a flying kite.
I saw the kite aloft a little pace
Leap up and down along its airy race
Like wild horse on the plains—quick to the right
And then to the left sheering as if affright.
Above the kite in far off azure space
I saw a bird float on with quiet grace
And pass beyond the limits of my sight.
'Tis ever thus, methought, with human things
And things of God. Lo! men with puny hands
Hold fragile frames a little while by strings
That reach but tiny lengths, but God commands

And living forms unfettered spread their wings
And range the world o'er all its seas and lands.

—Yale, 1876.

DREAMLAND.

I love to roam about the dreamland plains.

When banks of cloud in golden garb are drest
And piled at sunset 'long the distant west,

I love to leave the toils of time, the stains
Of sin, and all the sublunary pains

That so distract our frames, and go in quest
Of peace in happy fields of dreamland rest.

I wander up and down meandering lanes

Among the trees and flowers and borders green,
And feel my hot brow cooled by zephyrs blown

From sylvan groves with shadows all between;
'Tis then I lose all sense of grief my own

And dwell at ease 'mid many a dreamland scene
Or worship at some dreamland sovereign's throne.

—1878.

THE HEARSE.

What coach is that? Behold yon rolling wheels

Moving along the stony paved street

Behind the tramp of iron-shodden feet

Which ring upon the stones. Whence roll those
reels

Bearing aloft a car with plumes, the seals

Of sad intent? Those drapings dark that greet

Observant eyes—the trappings all so neat—

What mean they? Ah! I see—their meaning steals
Across my brain—it is the coach of Death!
It is that car in which we all must ride
When pale and cold we wear Death's bridal
wreath
And go with him his unconsenting bride;
In it Death takes us to his home beneath
The sod, and there we lie down by his side.
—Yale, 1876.

THE GRAVE.

And what is this—this opening in the ground
Just newly made? I look around and lo!
An answer comes, the very truth I know.
It is a grave. It is a home low-down
Wherein shall dwell some one alone. No frown
Shall ever wrinkle here; no jovial flow
Of genial hours; no words of friend or foe,
But only silence. Here of one renown
Are all. No proud with haughty mien, no eyes
Cast down in shame, no good, no youth, no age,
No simple ones to smirk, no otherwise
To criticise too harshly. Prince and page,
And sire and son, and who of time that dies,
All here lie down and cease a puny rage.
—Yale, 1876.

MY DEATHLESS SELF.

I'm dying aye, and yet not all I die—
I recollect the things of long ago.

In ceaseless current through my body flow
The earthy motes that halt so restlessly
Upon the shores of my mortality,
And then rush back with Nature's undertow
To Nature's deep whose limits none can know:
'Tis thus I'm dying aye, yet do not die.
That which dies not, the deathless self of me,
Unchanging is. 'Tis this that hopes and loves
Amid all change; 'tis this by faith can see
The future through; 'tis this the bygone proves
And laughs at thoughts of brief mortality;
My deathless self incarnate lives and moves.

INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY.

"*Non omnis moriar*," good Horace wrote
Long, long ago in proud imperial Rome.
He somehow knew that when the end should
come,
And at his feet the keel of Charon's boat
Should grate upon the sands, and then afloat
Go back again with him to Hades' home,
He somehow knew that o'er the Stygian foam
His fame would not be carried. Every note
His mortal sang would pulse in ceaseless beat
Along the shores of time, nor in the rush
Of human progress fail. As wine more sweet
With added seasons grows, or as the flush
Of morning with the day, so more complete
His fame would grow, sweeter his music's gush.

—1883.

In Many Moods.

PART II.

IN LIGHTER VEIN.

LASSES.

Toast.

Lasses, O bless 'em, ye angels above 'em!
Lasses, sweet lasses, I al'ays did love 'em!
Al'ays with lips was I willing to prove 'em—
Syrups or sweethearts.

Response.

Upon my word, toastmaster, the theme you've
given me
At first glance seems quite easy and charming as
can be,
But when one gets to thinking and lets his fancy
play
Just what is meant by lasses 'tis difficult to say.
At first I thought of lasses a-comin' thro' the rye,
And of the kissing laddies who made nobody cry;
And then I thought of 'lasses a-comin' thro' the
cane
And eaten by the laddies until they cried with pain.
“What can be meant by lasses?” I queried all
around,
But in the varied answers no satisfaction found;
Of all the answers given I deem the echo's best:
“Alas! a lass a lass is—” I failed to hear the rest.

Perhaps some one familiar with home's domestic
scenes

May think 'tis plain that lasses just plain molasses
means,

But surely he's forgotten the Missouri girls we prize
Are just as much Mo. lasses as the syrup that he
buys.

Methought I heard somebody, bolder than all the
rest,

A-talkin' of lickin' lasses and makin' that the test;
I'll wager a head o' cabbage against a mess o'
greens,

No teacher here can tell us what "lickin' lasses"
means.

'Tis true the simplest meaning that easy words
convey

Should help the question settle and drive all doubts
away,

And children eating syrup from all restrictions
freed—

Why, that is licking 'lasses, most certainly, indeed.

But stop! when girls are sealing the letters they
have penned

And placing the postage on 'em so Uncle Sam will
send,

Then whether those girls are happy, or tearful and
forlorn,

They all are licking lasses as sure as you are born.

Again, the most of teachers use switches now and
then

To make indifferent children their business attend;
Whenever the girls are punished—(I'm glad the
times are few,)—

There's nothing else to call it—that's licking lasses
too.

But why attempt still further to make this matter
plain,

Since every step we've taken has seemed so much
in vain?

"Alas! a lass a lass is—" the echo answered back,
And many a lass makes lasses in grammar and in
fact.

Then let us say, "O bless 'em, ye angels high
above 'em!"

And thus confess: "Sweet lasses, I've loved, I still
do love 'em!"

And with these lips as ever I'm willing now to
prove 'em—

Syrups or sweethearts."

—December, 1894.

CAIN AND ABEL.

When Abel was able to bring his sheep

And Cain his cane did fetch,

Then Cain grew mad and raised his cane

And Abel he beat till Abel was slain

And was not able to be Abel again,

And Cain became a wretch.

THEY VOTED STRAIGHT FOR PIKE.

Once on a time the gods in conclave sat
And talked about the various lands of earth:
Both pro's and con's were said of this and that—
Some truly sad and some provoking mirth.

After awhile to be from all doubts freed
Some one proposed a viva voce test,
And lo! they were unanimously agreed
The U. S. A. of all the lands was best.

Then rose a point about its many states:
"Which is the first of all its forty odd?"
And, don't you know, they had such warm debates
That never a one in all the crowd did nod.

At length 'twas moved: "Missouri's first of all;"
'Twas seconded and then the ballot spread,
And when the box was opened not a ball
Was black. "The ballot's clear," the chairman
said.

Then came the question most momentous yet:
"Missouri's counties—which of them is first?"
Each god had one on which his heart was set
And now debate ran fiercer far than erst.

Each praised his own, yet very strange to say
Each somehow failed to call his county's name,
And in the East were signs of coming day
Before the crowd to a conclusion came.

As last resort some one proposed to vote
By written ballot—each one to his like;
When these were read in alphabetic rote,
Lo! all the gods had voted straight for Pike.
—January, 1900.

CHRISTMAS IN ASHANTEE.

A kinky-headed kid whose home is in Ashantee
Once wrote a Christmas letter and sent it on to
Santa.

Now no one knows exactly where to send to Santa,
Nor did that kinky kid whose home is in Ashantee.

And yet he wrote a letter—wrote it in Ashantee,
Then stuck a cent upon it and sent it on to Santa.

It read about this way, this letter sent to Santa,
And written by that kid whose home is in Ashantee:

To Santy Claus—

Dear Santy: My home am in Ashantee—
De house am sorter holey, de chimbly sorter slanty.
A kinky-headed kid, I libs wid my ole Aunt, y
An' dis am what I wants—a B'goat an' a Banty.
I wants de goat to butt, an' den I wants de Banty
To strut aroun' an' crow when Billy butts my Aunt, y
It'll be de jollies' Christmas I eber had, dear Santy,
If yo' will only fotch a B'goat an' a Banty.

Yo's truly, Pickaninny,
At Aunt's in Ashantee.

Whether the kinky kid whose home is in Ashantee,
Who wrote a Christmas letter and sent it on to
Santa,

Received the goat or not, or ever got the banty
To strut around and crow while Billy butted Aunty,
I'm sure I cannot tell.

I only know that Santa
Has gotten many a letter, written from "a shanty"
Whose roof was none too good and chimney
"sorter slanty"

Asking as useless things as
a B'goat and a Banty.

—1898.

ONCE A PIKER ALWAYS A PIKER.

I was born in old Pike County
And I think there's nothing like 'er,
Tho' I've strayed beyond her border
Yet at heart I'm still a Piker.

As a fellow loves his sweetheart
'Cause he can not help but like 'er,
So a fellow loves Pike County
If he's ever been a Piker.

Sister, sweetheart, wife or mother—
O the world has nothing like 'er!
If you ever see a Pikess
You will want to be a Piker.

Eastward, westward, north'ard, south'ard
Upward, down'ard, nothing like 'er!
Pike's the center of creation
In the eyes of every Piker.

All her dead in—well, no matter—
Still believe there's nothing like 'er;
When old Gabriel toots his trumpet
Every Piker'll be a Piker.

—December, 1897.

KATE AND ESAU.

I saw Kate and Esau
Sitting on a seesaw.
Also I saw Esau
Kiss Kate upon the seesaw.
And Kate she saw
I saw Esau
Kiss her upon the seesaw.
And Esau he saw
She saw I saw
Him kiss her upon the seesaw.
And so I saw
And Kate she saw
And Esau he saw
And therefore we saw—
He saw, she saw, I saw—
Them sitting upon a seesaw and kissing,
Kate and Esau.

—1898.

'POSSUM HUNTIN'.

Don' yo' heah dat ho'n a-tootin?

Don' yo' heah dem niggahs hootin?
'Possum huntin' sho' as shootin'.

Is I gwine? Sho's yo' bo'n, sah;

Tramp de woods until de mo'n, sah;
Music in de huntah's ho'n, sah!

What's er possum? Make me grin, sah,

At dem questions! Whar's yo' bin, sah?
Is yo' anybody's kin, sah?

Shet up niggahs! Dar's ole Bowsah

Done a-trailin'—he's er rousah
Trackin' possums—beats ole Towsah.

How he barkin'! Bet he's treed 'im—

Barks 's if he almos' seed 'im—
Le's go git 'im—niggahs need 'im.

Bowsah sets de woods a-hummin'

Like a pheasan's wing a-drummin';
Talk to 'im, fella, we's a-comin'!

Gittin' close—I heahs 'im whinin'

's if he seed dem eyes a-shinin'
Ob dat possum he's bin fin'in.

Dar he am, sah! See dat lump, sah,

Up dat 'simmon bush—dat hump, sah?
Ef he coon, kin make 'im jump, sah.

Dat ain't coon, he stick too tightly;

Coon jump out ef shake 'im lightly—
Coon big eyes dey shine mo' brightly.

Possum, sho'. Sambo, I wush yo'
Come an' clime dis 'simmon bush, sah;
Git up quick, I gib yo' push, sah.

'Fraid he bite yo'? Git up, niggah,
Yo's de littles'—I'se de biggah—
Yo's de quicke' on de triggah.

'Simmons? Dar it am agin, sah!
Don' know nuffin! Whar's yo' bin, sah?
Is yo' anybody's kin, sah?

What yo' say? de tail won' loosen?
Co'se it won't dat's not amusin'—
'Possum tail was made fo' usin'.

Now yo's got 'im, sorter slap 'im
Till he ten' like he's a-nappin';
Look out, niggah, don' yo' drap 'im!

Dar, I'se got 'im—now le' go, sah;
Git out, Bowse, don' yo' know, sah,
Possum's ours an' not yo's, sah?

Am he dead? No, sah; he's playin'
's if he dead, but yo' go way an'
Think 'im dead an' leab 'im layin',

Bime by de possum grin, sah,
At de way he took yo' in, sah,
Den skedaddle home agin, sah.

Is de possum good to eat, sah?

Jes' de fines' kine ob meat, sah—
Roas'ed 'possum ha'd to beat, sah.

Ketch er possum in Octob'r

Skin or scrape 'im clean all ob'r
Like er shote fotch from de clob'r,

Skin or scrape 'im till yo' white 'im,

Hang 'im whar de moon kin light 'im,
Whar Jac' Fros' kin come an' bite 'im,

Den go git 'im, fat on 'simmons,

Take 'im down an' let de wimmens
Roas' 'im wid sweet 'tater trimmins,

An' I tell yo' what's de troof. sah—

Dar'll be dancin' 'neath dat roof, sah—
Ebry niggah shake 'is hoof, sah.

Den yo'll heah de banjo pickin'—

See de pickaninnies kickin'
Dancin' "Juba" like de dickens.

Lots o' white folks—men an' wimmens—

Fon' o' 'possum fat on 'simmons,
'Specially wid sweet 'tater trimmin's.

Roas'ed 'possum an' sweet 'tater,

Skillet lid turned up fo' waiter—
Go 'way, boss, I see yo' later!

But I heahs de roostahs crowin',

De's de midnight hour a-showin,—
Toot yo' ho'n, boys, le's be goin'.

MINN-IA-MO ARK-LA.

Minniamo Arkla is a giant huge and tall
Who lies in length twelve hundred miles upon this
earthly ball;

He ne'er has stood on his one foot—one leg and
foot has he—

At least as far as I can tell it looks that way to me.

Minniamo Arkla—this giant would you see?

Go hunt up your geography and bring it here to me;
Now find the U. S. map and down its middle
stretched

You'll find this mighty giant, of which I've told
you, sketched.

Minniamo Arkla is a giant tall and huge,

His cap is marked St. Paul, his slippers Baton
Rouge:

His eye is shut so tight you'll look for it in vain,

But his ear is marked Des Moines and his nose is
very plain.

Minniamo Arkla, tho' a giant none can mock,

Wears kneepants and plays marbles—in his pock-
et's a Little Rock;

His coat is tagged Jeff City—I don't know 'bout
his vest—

But St. Louis is a diamond jewel on his breast.

Minniamo Arkla—now don't forget the name—

That was his Indian title; but since the Yankees
came,

They've turned it and they've carved it, just as
they would a ham,
Till now we know this giant by the name of Uncle
Sam.

—1894.

IN DE CITY OB ST. LOUIS IN 1903.

Ole 'oman, listen to me—now de chillens all in bed—
Jess listen whiles I tell yo' what I hea'd de parson
said,

What he tole us at de meetin' ob de 'ficial boa'd
tonight—

For de parson reads de papers while he ten's de
gospel light.

Dars gwine to be er circus—dat egzactly ain't de
name

What de parson tole de bredren but it means about
de same—

Dar's gwine to be er circus an' he say its gwine to
be

In de city ob St. Louis in 1903.

'Twill be de bigges' circus dat de worl' has eber
had,

An' its gwine to be er circus whar dar won't be
nothin' bad;

De pasture an' his people widout breakin' ob de
rules

Kin go to see de circus as well as de animules.

All sexes ob religion—de Gentile an' de Jew,
De Bāptis' an' de Methodis' an' de 'Piscopalians
too—

All sexes ob religion, he say, was gwine to see
De circus in St. Louis in 1903.

Dar's gwine to be percessions an' de ban's am
gwine to play

An' de tents will cubber acres—dats what de parson
say—

An' when yo' gits yo' ticket—'twill cos' yo' fifty
cents—

De'll let yo' in for nothin' to go thro' all dem
tents.

Dar'll be jess scads o' goobers an' de pinkes'
lemonade—

Dar'll be fried pies an' do'nuts de bestes' eber
made—

An' de'll let yo' in at mornin' to stay all day an' see
Dat circus in St. Louis in 1903.

Ole 'oman, yo' ought to bin dar to heard 'im
'spatiate

About dis country's glory, an' Providence an' fate;
He say de Lord was in it when Jeff'son took de
chance

To purchase Loozyannie f'om Bonypart ob France,
An' dat de Lord intended f'om far creation's
birth

To manifest his glory to all de tribes ob yearth
In de Miss'sippi valley—de time an' place to be
In de city ob St. Louis in 1903.

L of C.

To help de Lord to show us de glory dat awaits,
De parson say de Congress ob dese United States
Would gib five million dolla's to help de cause
along,

An' den de whiles de choir was singin' ob er song,
De States an' corpyrations would march up to de
table

An' plank de'se money down as much as de' is
able;

No doubt at all about it—dat circus gwine to be
In de city ob St. Lous in 1903.

Ole 'oman, we mus' see it—we sho'ly can't afford
To miss dis chance o' seein' de glory ob de Lord;
Altho we's been good Methodis' we might back-
slide an' fall

An' not git into heaven to see de Lord at all.
So we mus' take de chances dis side de pearly
gates—

De parson say de railroads will gib excursion rates—
An' yo' an' me, ole 'oman, mus' sho'ly go to see
Dat circus in St. Louis in 1903.

—March, 1900.

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